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DEC 18 1930

DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY
AT HOME & ABROAD



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6d.

Published by
THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
8 ADELPHI TERRACE
LONDON
W.C.

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DRAMA

VOL. 9

DECEMBER MCMXXX

NUMBER 3

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

RECENT PLAYS

By Herbert Farjeon

IT would be idle to pretend that our London theatres have provided much excitement during the past month. An examination, however, of theatrical productions from Mid-October to Mid-November in previous years would probably show that this is rarely a very exhilarating period.

By the middle of October the managers have sprung their big autumn offensive. When that is over, the productions immediately succeeding are mostly those required to fill gaps caused by sudden and un-anticipated failures. Forlornish hopes are given the benefit of the doubt that rent may not be wasted, revivals are rushed to the rescue.

Thus, the revivals of *The Grain of Mustard Seed* at the Ambassadors and *The Playboy of the Western World* at the Criterion followed fast on the failure of *Knave and Queen* and *The Far-off Hills*. These were welcome returns, for Synge's poetical comedy cannot be seen too often and Mr. Harwood's political satire still holds good. If they were no longer novelties, they were something much more respectable.

Most of the new plays will soon be forgotten—some of them, indeed, may be forgotten by those who see them even before they are withdrawn. Messrs. Jack de Leon and Jack Celestin have taken us on another crook's tour round the underworld at the Lyceum. But *The House of Mystery* is as undistinguished as its title, which might serve equally well for a hundred other thrillers. Similarly, *The Man Who Kissed His Wife*, at the Prince of Wales' does little more than conjure up a familiar atmosphere of artful wives, returning husbands, and bright young people—

this time without tennis-rackets. Mr. Donald Buckley is a craftsman competent enough to get his characters off the stage without the aid of a lawn tennis court in the wings. But we seem to have imbibed his afternoon tea before.

Neither the bright young people nor the haphazard collection of guests they invited to dinner saved Mr. Frank Vosper's *Lucky Dip* from an early collapse at the Comedy. Mr. Vosper was clearly hard driven to make this party go, and although he was resourceful in suggesting new diversions throughout the evening, they were diversions of desperation. It is the guests who make the party. The guests in the auditorium never caught fire. Two odd echoes from the past were *An Object of Virtue*, Mr. Edward Percy's adaptation of *Le Gendre de Monsieur Poirier*, at the Duchess, and *Wooden Shoes*, Miss Beatrice Thompson's adaptation of Ouida's novel, at the Kingsway. *An Object of Virtue* might have been more effective had Miss Jean Forbes-Robertson and Mr. C. V. France realised they were acting a hundred years ago. *Wooden Shoes*, with its high romantic convictions, could not be called a piece of the first class, but very objectively regarded, it furnished a few pleasant peeps at the false and emollient idealism Mr. Bernard Shaw set out to destroy.

The most "serious" new piece of the month was Capt. Reginald Berkeley's *Machines*, which began by making the audiences at the Arts Theatre think they ought to be thinking and ended by making them feel they ought to be feeling. The most frivolous new piece of the month was *Nippy*—a musical comedy

RECENT PLAYS

vehicle for Miss Binnie Hale, who would justify inclusion in "To-days Special Dish" in something even more epicurean than a Corner House Menu.

Miss Binnie Hale as Nippy at the Prince Edward, Mr. John Gielgud as Richard II at the Old Vic. (a performance which had gained in depth and beauty), and the whole of the Embassy Theatre Repertory Company in Goldoni's comedy, *The Liar*—these provided

for me the three treats of the month. *The Liar* was a delicious entertainment which did the greatest credit to Mr. Whatmore as producer and to Mrs. Lovat Fraser as translator and designer of costumes. It should be the prologue to a Goldoni revival. But what should be is not what will be. If Goldoni is given another chance in London during the next decade, it will be as surprising as it will be delightful.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE

By Harley Granville-Barker

DURING these last twelve years of readjustment circumstances have hardly been propitious for the forwarding of such an enterprise as the National Theatre. The need for it may never have been greater. Public opinion, I believe, has been steadily moving in its favour, but the practical difficulties have never been so great. Last summer those of us who have been watching for an opportunity thought that the time had come to set the ball rolling again. Here is what was done. To begin with, the BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE sent a circular letter to a certain number of people who might be supposed in their varying ways to be the leaders of public opinion, asking them whether, without committing themselves to any particular method of finance or organisation, they were in favour of a National Theatre. The response was most satisfactory both in quantity and quality. The list of the names was published in *DRAMA* for December. Then a conference was held in one of the committee rooms of the House of Commons under the chairmanship of Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, to which a number of people known to be interested in the matter were bidden, and this conference appointed a panel of six, two members of the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre committee, two of the Drama League and two from a Parliamentary Fine Arts Committee that had recently been formed to nominate a committee to draft a National Theatre scheme which would reflect post war conditions. This drafting committee consisted of the Earl of Lytton, Chairman, Miss Lena Ashwell, Mr. Kenneth Barnes, Sir Israel Gollanez (whose recent loss we deplore), Mr. Percy Harris, M.P., Major J.

W. Hills, M.P., Sir Frank Meyer, Professor Allardyce Nichol, Mr. Walter Payne, Sir Nigel Playfair and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth. In due time they produced their Report and their Scheme.

I now only need to comment briefly first upon the scheme itself and next upon the means and the possibilities of implementing it.

The scheme itself is definitely a "big" scheme. It envisages the theatre as a self-contained institution, with two auditoria, and a company large enough for every sort of play, and a sufficient organisation. The committee does not pledge itself to the cost of carrying it out, but it is evident that a credit of about a million pounds would be needed. Note that I say *credit* of a million pounds and not that much in the bank. There is a practical difference. Now, National Theatre advocates divide themselves roughly into two classes, those who believe that it can best grow from small beginnings, and those who are convinced that it must be begun on about the scale it means to continue upon. There is, as it would seem, much to be said for the idea of the theatre growing from small beginnings. This has precedent in its favour. Have not all genuine artistic enterprises so grown? The flaw in the argument is that it does not take account of (a) the peculiar organisation of a theatre, and (b) modern conditions. What applies to a Shakespeare at the Globe and a Molière at the Theatre du Marais, with their simple staging, their limited audiences, and, in fact, all the social and financial conditions which differentiate the 17th century from the 20th century—all these things do not apply to the problem in hand. You might start a very admirable theatre doing good plays and

THE NATIONAL THEATRE

doing them very well. It could have a permanent company; it could be a repertory theatre; it could even call itself a National Theatre and be one, if you like, in the sense that the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, became a National Theatre, fulfilling for all I know, all the conditions that an Irish National Theatre need fulfill. But, when you come to making it fulfill—really fulfill—all the conditions of an English National Theatre, doing all the plays which would have to be done for it to be really representative, you would find that a change would have to be made, so great a change in degree that it amounted to a change in kind. This is a purely practical question and it will not be understood except by those people who have taken the trouble to go into the matter thoroughly to consider to consider the number of plays and the costs of production, the number of actors needed and their salaries, the necessities of organisation, and the variety and numbers of audiences that must be appealed to. If you want proof that what I say is true, you have it in history of various more or less admirable enterprises of a so called repertory sort, which have been begun during the last thirty years, but which have never been able to expand beyond a certain point (and quite wisely have not attempted to), or which have come to an end through the exhaustion of the impulse which started them, because they never could round the difficult point, because development was always checked when this necessity for a radical change occurred. It is not the big scheme which should have to prove itself; it is the advocates of the small scheme who should be asked to tell us, firstly, how their schemes would have any right, by the work they could do, in quality and quantity to the title of a National Theatre, and if this is a mere beginning, then how they would negotiate the development into conditions which would give them that right. The Committee's report can be, to my mind, criticised in detail, and I am rather sorry they did not commit themselves more definitely to figures. Nevertheless, it stands as perfectly practical proposal which can be carried out as soon as the site for the building can be found and the funds made available.

As to the funds, a proposal has been brought forward, which the Committee do not specifically mention, but which I believe they considered favourably. It is that a portion of

the profits made by the British Broadcasting Company should be allotted by the Government, first, as a credit for the establishment of a National Theatre, then, if and as may be needed, for a yearly endowment in its support. There is much to be said in favour of this. First as between public money and private subscriptions. I do not believe it is practicable to raise a credit of a million pounds by private subscriptions today for the National Theatre. One can recall past history in the matter. In twenty-five years the National Theatre Committee has succeeded in raising not quite a tenth of this, and of that they received £80,000 in a lump sum. We need not look for a dozen more gifts of this nature. And as to attempting to collect the money in small sums, the cost of this in both energy and in money would, I think, be prohibitive. We have had a recent lesson of this sort in the fate of the Imperial League of Opera. I believe therefore, we must have public money; and incidentally we ought to have public, that is to say, official approval. The theatre ought, from the beginning, to be a National Theatre in the fullest sense of the word. On the other hand, I do not see any Chancellor of the Exchequer in our time putting nakedly down in his Budget a credit for a million pounds for a National Theatre. But the B.B.C. money is in rather a different category. It is rather in the nature of profit earned by a Corporation working under a Government monopoly. And that part of the profit which would be drawn upon is at present returned to the Treasury only under a subsequent contract with the Post Office, not under the Charter itself. In any case it does not come directly out of the taxpayers pockets. Moreover, the money is earned, partly at any rate, by the exploiting of the arts of Music and to a lesser extent certainly, Drama. I don't want to press this point too far, but it would be appropriate enough if money earned by the Arts, instead of being returned to the Treasury as it now is, should be used for the support of the Arts. Incidentally, so big is the profit, the National Theatre for all its demands need only claim a small proportion of it. Here, then, without the vexatious waste of energy and money involved in collecting large sums in small amounts—here is the means of finance.

For the moment, however,—but I think only for the moment—this also is not practicable. With national finances as they are

THE NATIONAL THEATRE

it would be a waste of time, and personally I think it would be wrong, to ask or even expect the Chancellor of the Exchequer to give up a single halfpenny of it. But I do not see why all three political parties might not be asked to agree upon the question in principle, so that, as soon as a Chancellor of the Exchequer is able to turn round and take breath, some, at least of these B.B.C. net profits which now come nearer to half a million than a quarter a year, should not be earmarked for the badly needed support of the Fine Arts, and especially the Arts that in England need it most—those of Music and Drama.

The next step then, I think, is by whatever means may be possible, to obtain this assent in principle. And the best means will be to organise public opinion in its favour. This is what the Council of the British Drama League recommend and indeed urge their constituent societies to do. First, for those who are really interested in the subject to master something of the technique of it, so they know roughly what the theatre and its organisation means and needs; secondly, to take and make whatever occasion is possible to spread this knowledge by meetings, debates and journalism; thirdly, to secure the support of the public men with whom the decision in the matter will finally lie. As to members of parliament and would-be members, one does not urge their constituents to withhold their votes from them because they are not prepared to vote against their party, if need be, for a National Theatre, but there is no reason why they should not at canvassing and election times have it brought home to them that this is a thing their constituents care about. Moreover, there is much influencing of public opinion to be done apart from this. It is very difficult to say how in a democracy of this sort things do get done. It is obviously not by converting a large majority of electors. We need never expect to have twenty million votes cast for the establishment of a National Theatre. The conversion of a minority will do, but it must be a minority that counts—those people who make opinion; and, in the various circles in which we move and work we know fairly well which they are. I recommend them as the particular objective; and upon the day that a sufficient number of them make up their minds that a National Theatre is one of the things that England needs for her spiritual and intellectual health, on that day its establishment will be assured.

THREE BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

"THE Book of Martin Harvey" (Henry Walker, 10s. net) is a finely illustrated volume which would make a wonderfully suitable Christmas present for any admirer of this fine actor. The book contains, among other interesting chapters, "The True Story of *THE ONLY WAY*," "Some Reflections on Hamlet," "Thoughts on Scenery and Production," and a verbatim report of Sir John's Appeal for a "Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre," the best short authoritative exposition of the case which has yet been made. There are over eighty reproductions of stage designs and portraits, and at the price the book is a marvel of "value."

In "Pantomimes" (Elkin, Mathews and Marrot, 6s.) Lord Howard de Walden has published the five children's plays which have formed since 1923 the repertoire of his "Family Theatre," and in his "Author's Note" he gives a delightful picture of the domestic background against which the plays were given. Many other families will find here just what they need for Christmas performances, either at home or in some intimate Little Theatre. As an example of the new turn that is given to the old stories, we may take "The Sleeping Beauty," in which the last scene shows us a 17th century Princess awakened from her ter-centennial doze by a prince in "flagrant plus fours and a beret." Children have loved these plays, and many more will do so now they are made available to a wider public.

Finally, in the new edition of "Everyman" (J. M. Dent, 10s. 6d.) Mr. Thomas Derrick has produced one of the most notable series of illustrations which have appeared for a long time. One of them is reproduced elsewhere in this issue of *DRAMA*. The designs are intensely dramatic, and will be found wonderfully suggestive to anyone who is contemplating a production of this play.

Mrs. English, of Youth House, 250 Camden Road, N.W.1, writes that she would welcome performances of short plays by amateur societies on Monday evenings, next year. If any Society would like to give such a performance would they communicate with her direct.



SCENE FROM "GATHER YE ROSEBUDS,"
AS PRODUCED BY THE CENTRAL SCHOOL
OF SPEECH TRAINING AND DRAMATIC
ART, AT THE SCALA THEATRE, JULY,
1930.





HENRY IRVING AS MEPHISTOPHELES.
FROM THE DRAWING BY PAUL
RENOUARD. REPRODUCED FROM
MR. GORDON CRAIG'S NEW BOOK,
"HENRY IRVING," PUBLISHED BY
J. M. DENT & SONS, LTD.

THE CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS DRAMA

By The Bishop of Chichester

ONCE again the Passion Play at Oberammergau has made a profound impression on the multitudes of men and women who witnessed its production. It is remarkable that in what is generally regarded as a secular age so many thousands of different nations and very different creeds should have been drawn to the distant Bavarian village to see the ancient gospel story acted afresh. It is not less remarkable that so small a place with but two thousand inhabitants should be able to create such a play and to give it with such intensity and power. Everybody knows that it is an offering of worship for the players. For the audience also it becomes a similar offering.

The Oberammergau Play is of comparatively modern growth. But all over Europe in former days the Church and the Drama intimately connected. In no country was the connection more conspicuous than in England. The Church was the Cradle of the Theatre. In the Church and out of it, in the precincts of the Cathedral, on the open space beside the West Door, or under the shelter of its buildings, in the Nave, or even in the Choir itself, the mysteries of the Christian religion were long presented in dramatic form. There were nativity Plays, Passion Plays, Easter Plays, Miracle Plays, Plays relating to events in the Old Testament such as the Flood or the Sacrifice of Isaac, and there were Morality Plays like *Everyman*. It was in the main from inspiration which all these gave that (as every scholar knows) the whole Drama of England developed.

In the course of that development the Drama moved both in the place and in the treatment and subject, away from the Church. It left the Church building and precincts for the market and the town and buildings of its own. It widened its range, till it embraced all manner of themes with which religion had nothing to do. At last the old connection completely ceased; and, as Dr. A. C. Bradley says in *Shakespearean Tragedy*, "the Elizabethan Drama was almost wholly secular." Boys of great church choirs, like the children of St. Paul's and the Chapel Royal, in the 16th century were indeed in great demand as actors; but

the plays in which they took part were plays for the secular stage, and had secular subjects. And early in the 17th century their employment was prohibited on the ground that "it is not fit or decent that such as should sing the praise of the God Almighty should be trained or employed in such lascivious or profane exercises."

The breach between the Church and the Drama grew rather than diminished until the latter half of the nineteenth century. But as that drew to its close and the twentieth century began, the attitude of churchmen underwent a change, which in its turn reflected the change in the theatre. One most significant event which registered that change was the burial in Westminster Abbey, under Dean Armitage Robinson, of the man who had up to that date done more than any other to raise the character of the English Stage, Sir Henry Irving.

Side by side with the alteration in the attitude of churchmen generally to the Theatre has gone a great revival in the Drama of religion. The writing, as well as the production, of religious plays in the modern world is a very recent development; but it is most marked. It is not so very long since a distinguished living producer, Nugent Monck, was threatened with prosecution under the Blasphemy Laws for desiring to revive the old Mystery Plays. But the wide vogue of *Everyman*, the astonishingly successful production of Nativity Plays like Laurence Housman's *Bethlehem*, Miss Buckton's *Eager Heart*, Charles Clay's *Joyous Pageant of the Nativity*, and very many others, besides translations of the beautiful Plays by Paul Claudel (*The Tidings brought to Mary*) and Henri Ghéon, are sufficient evidence of the revolution in public opinion. A special debt of gratitude is due to William Poel, the pioneer in this field. Even more striking is the fact that some of the finest living English poets are turning to the Bible and religion for most moving plays and scenes. I content myself with calling attention to the plays of the Poet Laureate, *The Trial of Jesus*, *Good Friday*, *Easter*, and would note as a symbolic event in the revival of religious drama within the Church of England his *Coming of Christ*,

THE CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS DRAMA

produced by Charles Ricketts, with music by Holst, in Canterbury Cathedral, at Whitsuntide, two years ago.

In the light of this movement in religious plays, of the new eagerness of many poets, and the new attitude of the Church, the appointment of a Director of Religious Drama in the Diocese of Chichester may be welcomed as peculiarly fitting in the year of the Oberammergau Play. The creation of this post is intended not only to deepen the regard in religious plays (including poetic plays), but to give the right guidance in their choice and production.

I believe that through religious drama religious truth may be brought home afresh, and the imagination healed and stirred; that the Bible itself may be understood in a new and vivid way; and so many may be helped and kindled who would otherwise (to their loss and ours) pass all their lives untouched by the Church. I also hold that the presentation of religious drama in a right spirit and an excellent form is itself an offering of worship.

I wish to lead some to make that offering as artists or as players, and as audience, who have not found an avenue of worship before.

The work of the Director will no doubt increase with increasing experience. He will find out what is already being done in Sussex. He will be ready to give help or advice when he is asked. He will desire, and, I trust secure a high standard, in which sincerity and simplicity have an important part. The plays which he will himself produce, as opportunity offers, will be good plays, honestly acted, well and worthily presented. Some may be given in Church (and for this my special permission will be required), others in halls or out of doors, especially at the Church's seasons, or linked with some particular festival or saint, both in town and country. I hope that not a few plays may be taken out by the players from the town to neighbouring villages and stir a local effort there. The task of the Director is great and very varied, though it will require time to accomplish; and it is in the fullest sense religious.

DIALECT

By Mary Kelly

THE village player has many enemies, to stand between him and the reasonable and natural development of the art of the drama, but among the worst of these enemies is the producer who does his utmost to eliminate the characteristics which distinguish the countrymen from the townsman. This producer is determined, as far as possible, to reduce the speech of his players to a dead level of refinement, and greatest relief is what he calls "The dreadful accent of these people!" If he were to succeed, he would be able to destroy one of the most precious links with antiquity that we now possess, for the speech of country people goes back to the time when men invented words to express their daily needs, and the words, as they use them have usually their ancient root meaning. In the place, names, and in the idiom of the household and the farm, country people still use the words first coined by the old ancient men. But even in the place names, the influence of the superior person is now felt, for though the old pronunciation may carry with it the

actual history of the birth of the place, the "educated" person who sees it written quite differently from the pronunciation, insists that the spelling is the guide. The countryman, with an infinite respect for book-learning acquiesces, and tries to teach his tongue this new method.

It is not only the producer who is at fault in this war on dialect, but, very often, the schoolmaster, who is a foreigner. The children are taught in the schools that they must not pronounce the words as their parents do, nor phrase their sentences in such a manner, for that is "common speech."

If they were given a pure form of standard English to learn side by side with their own natural speech, but not in place of it, they would be the gainers, for they would become bi-lingual; but this is not so, for the people who do war on dialect are not themselves sufficiently cultured to be able to teach pure English, and the result is the spreading of a kind of a meaningless twang, and of a journalese method of expression. The 25-

DIALECT

sumption made by these misguided producers and teachers is that dialect is badly pronounced and ungrammatical English, instead of the remains of quite definite forms of the same language, each with an idiom and pronunciation of its own. The dialect of Westmoreland for example, which belonged to the Scandinavian group, was, until lately said to be so much like Icelandic that a Westmoreland man could read the Icelandic Bible; again, it was said of the men of East Riding that they could make themselves understood in Norway. In Cornwall, much of the idiom and turn of phrases comes from the literal translation into English of a Celtic tongue; in the Saxon counties, you find words and phrases that are exactly the same in Germany to this day.

In such a county as Devon, where there is no hurry, and a ceaseless flow of conversation accompanies all work, one has endless opportunities for studying the dialect; it is slow, and soft and musical, especially towards the Western side, where Dartmoor mists give the voices an added richness; it is full of similes, like all primitive speech, and of proverbs. And these similes belong to the speech, and to its pronunciation. You may say, "He was like a toad under a harrow, he did not know which way to turn," but the image is by no means the same as when you say "Er was like a toad under a harrow, didn' know whichee way to turn, sure nough." This speech of ours is beautiful, musical, rhythmical and expressive; it belongs to these people, half Celt and half Saxon, it belongs to our rich fields, and wooded hills, it belongs to our air, so soft and warm and plump. This mixture of blood, this form of country, this air we breathe has made us into Devon men and women, and it has formed the speech which is the expression of that in us which is essentially Devon. And this is so with every county;—dialect is not the speech of those who are too ignorant to know better, it is the natural expression of the people who belong to the land. With it goes the pose, the gesture and the movements of the country; it sets the pace as it were. A farmer told me once; "I speak good English when I go out, but I must work on my farm in Cornish." His real life must be lived with real speech;—the other was only his Sunday suit, which is always an unbecoming and uncomfortable thing.

The present dramatic movement may do much to rescue dialect from those who lie in wait to destroy it, if only the producers who are working with village plays can realise its beauty, and dignity, and expressiveness. Dramatists are beginning to realise it, as you will find, in the series of Village Drama Society plays, that a really sensitive use is being made of it, by the authors who write from the country. It is impossible to write plays of country life and character unless you have lived among the people; you must live at the least 20 years in one village before the people cease to regard you as a foreigner, and when you have lived there that time, you will hardly be able to write a play about village life without writing in dialect. Glebe-shire or Loamshire, or any other dialect, is no mortal use for country players; the dialect must be a pure one. If it is written in one good dialect, it is always quite easy to translate the play in rehearsal, and Yorkshire plays are played very successfully in Devon. Phonetic writing is undesirable, because it puzzles those who naturally speak in that dialect, and does not help those who cannot.

Producers will naturally allow their players to play dialect plays in dialect, but those who despise it to begin with are not going to choose such common things as dialect plays. But when they have chosen Shakespeare, or some modern play, it is then that the speech afflicts them. Now with Shakespeare this is entirely unreasonable, since the speech of Shakespeare's day was very much more closely allied to dialect than it is to modern English. You will find when you are doing Shakespeare in such a county as Devonshire that many words which have to be put into the notes in school editions are still in common use in the village. In Devon, to take a simple instance, the present tense retains the "er saith" ("er" being a general pronoun denoting man woman or thing). So that Elizabethan English runs very easily off the tongue. There are, of course, plays in which dialect is entirely inappropriate, but in these plays village players are in themselves inappropriate; these are modern society plays, or American plays of town life.

I am afraid much of the trouble really arises from snobbishness, because we are a snobbish nation, especially in the South. There is so great a tendency to appear something which we are not, something a little higher in the social scale, and of course, when we are trying

DIALECT

very hard for this, it is very disheartening when our speech betrayeth us! If we speak like country people, we shall actually be taken for country people, not smart, or rich, or up-to-date, or anything else, but just country cousins. And that would be unthinkable!

If people really feel that they have to be snobbish,—well, I suppose they must be; but when village producers are bringing this snobbishness into their work with the players they are doing an impertinent thing, and one

that will for ever hinder the real object of their work. For their job is to make the drama a genuine means for the countryman to express his hidden and inarticulate sense of the beauty and dignity of life. He has a fine instrument of expression in the speech of his forefathers and it is only through his natural speech that he can reach a natural expression of his spirit. If the producers are going to derive him of this and set a thin mongrel speech in its place;—what is going to become of his drama?

THE EXETER CONFERENCE

THE annual Provincial meetings of the British Drama League are, as those who have attended them know, by no means all "Conference," and this year the good people of Exeter contrived to spoil us with hospitality in all kinds of ways. Elsewhere we deal with the Conference itself. Here we must record the chief items in a programme which kept our members hard at play from the evening of Friday, October 30th, until nearly midnight on the Sunday evening. At the Mayor's Reception on the Friday evening Alderman H. C. Rowe proved a most delightful host, and after an optimistic speech from Mr. Alec Rea, the general cheerfulness was heightened by an admirable programme of music and no less admirable refreshments. On the Saturday evening there was a performance of three plays—"The Man of Destiny" (G. B. Shaw), "The House Fairy" (Laurence Housman), and "The Dumb Wife of Cheapside" (Ashley Dukes). These plays were excellently performed by members of the Exeter Drama League.

Previous to the plays, over two hundred people had sat down to dine at the famous Deller's restaurant. Mr. St. John Ervine made an excellent after-dinner speech—the pith of which was a striking attack on the Conference Resolution to the effect that the speaking of dialect should be encouraged by the League. Mr. Ervine regarded this as a retrograde move. Dialect meant a separation between different localities, whereas the whole of our modern effort was in the direction of pooling our resources and throwing down barriers. Such a policy as that indicated by the resolution was one which no self-respecting League should abet....

At the Cathedral on Sunday morning the Dean preached a special sermon, in which he reminded his hearers that although the Church and the Theatre had not always been on good terms, the Church had been the Mother or at least the Nurse of dramatic art through the means of religious drama, and it was the mission of art "to gladden human life, to lend wings to the soul, and to bring heaven nearer." The beautifully rendered musical service, under the direction of Dr. Armstrong, was much appreciated by the large congregation.

In the afternoon the Dean and Mrs. Gamble welcomed over 130 delegates to tea at the Deanery. There were no speeches, but there was much conversation, and a great deal of gratitude to our very kind host and hostess.

Finally, in the evening, delegates were invited to an entertainment of music at Hope House, one of the residential hostels of the newly-founded University College of the South-West. Again much conversation, and *an revoir* for the Conference at Hull next year.

Much of the success of the Conference was due, of course, to Miss Cicely Radford and to the Committee of the Exeter Drama League, and everyone was pleased by the tribute made to her by her Exeter friends in the shape of the silver inkstand presented to her at the dinner on the Saturday evening.

Next Year's Conference will be held at Hull, under the auspices of the Hull Repertory Theatre and the Hull Playgoer's Society. Between Hull and the Drama historical associations are numerous and important, and they have been carefully described by Mr. T. Sheppard in his interesting volume "The Evolution of the Drama in Hull and District."

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF

THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

President :

LORD HOWARD DE WALDEN.

Chairman of the Council :

H. GRANVILLE-BARKER.

Secretary : GEOFFREY WHITWORTH.

Hon. Treasurer : ALEC REA.

MSS. for publication in DRAMA will be considered if accompanied by stamps for return if unsuitable. All Enquiries should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary at the Office of the League, 8 Adelphi Terrace, London, W.C.2.

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Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

ARRANGEMENTS for the 1931 National Festival of Community Drama are well in hand, and although all the entries have not yet been received, it is safe to prophesy a number largely in excess of last year's total of 390. Both the Eastern and the Scottish Areas are up by approximately 50 entries. Adjudications will begin in earnest after Christmas, and we hope soon to be able to announce an interesting scheme which is designed to attract many of the smaller village societies which have hitherto felt unable to take part in the Festival. If this can be achieved it should go some way to meet the views expressed by Mr. Weston Wells in his article in the October number of *DRAMA*, where he pleaded for the non-competitive rather than the competitive spirit in the Festival. It is clear that the entry of a large number of elementary Societies who perhaps have little hope of reaching a high place in the Festival must tend to stress the educational rather than the competitive spirit. That is all to the good.

For next year we are planning several developments in our holiday Drama Schools. In April there will be Schools, after Easter, in London and at St. Ives, each lasting a fortnight. A Second Norwich School will run from July 29th to August 12th, and we hope for a third St. Andrew's School in the last half of August. Each of these gatherings will have its special feature. In London, at King's College, Kensington, besides lectures and rehearsals, there will be discussions and debates on the best plays then running in the West-End. At St. Ives, ballad-mimes will form a special branch of study, and there will be a class for children.

The Norwich School will be held as before, at the Maddermarket Theatre where, within the first few days, Mr. Nugent Monck will give performances of Elizabethan and Georgian plays and music. Visits will be organised to the Broads, and the City will be explored for its fine examples of the architecture of all periods—from Norman Castle to Georgian Mansion, in illustration of lectures on scene and property design. All four Schools will conclude with performances by the Students.

Miss Nancy Price and Mr. J. T. Grein have safely embarked on their venture of establishing a "People's Theatre" for London. With twenty thousand original subscribers the season at the Fortune Theatre starts with a measure of popular support more substantial than mere goodwill. All this is very encouraging.

Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth has been appointed Hon. Secretary of the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee in the place of the late Sir Israel Gollancz who held this office for over 23 years.

We regret that owing to pressure on our space we have been obliged to hold over the first of Mr. Lewis' articles on "The Technique of the One-act Play" until the January number.

RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

"Speechcraft." By Elsie Fogerty. Dent, 3s. 6d.
"The Art of Speaking." By Ernest Pertwee. Routledge, 3s. 6d.

"Speech and Movement on the Stage." By Kate Emil-Behnke. Oxford University Press. 7s. 6d.

"The Chester Miracle Plays." Edited by I. and O. Bolton. S.P.C.K., 6s.

"Old Plays for Modern Players." Edited by W. Dyfed Parry. Arnold, 2s.

"At the Well of Bethlehem." By Mona Swan. (Privately printed).

"Light of the World." By H. Debenham. French 1s. 6d.

"The Cradle King." By C. Beverly Davies. S.P.C.K., 1s. 6d.

"The Duchess of Malfi." and "The White Devil." Illustrated by Henry Keen. Bodley Head, 21s.

"English Children's Costumes." Drawn and described by Iris Brooke. Black, 6s.

IN a recent Shakespearean production an actress in one of the smaller parts gave a performance which many of the audience and one or two of the critics considered a fine example of "clear enunciation." It was certainly true that everything that this actress said could be clearly heard. It was not just that she spoke every single word equally and clearly distinctly; she was equally careful about every single syllable of every word she spoke. People round about me were murmuring to one another about her "wonderful diction," but to me she was completely inaudible. Every word and every syllable was "elocuted" with equally devastating efficiency; no word and no syllable seemed more important than another, with the result that her speeches became a mere monotonous rattle of "perfectly enunciated" words and syllables which seemed to have no particular meaning. I can easily imagine somebody carefully digesting Mr. Pertwee's "The Art of Speaking" and falling into this deadly monotonous sort of delivery, but the fault would not be altogether Mr. Pertwee's. His book is excellent as far as it goes, but it only deals with the elementary mechanics of his subject, and in spite of its title the book has little reference to the art as opposed to the mechanics of speech beyond a vague exhortation to "convey that mystery which underlies the beautiful in life, be it glad or sad."

Miss Elsie Fogerty's book is also a primer on the subject, but it is more detailed than Mr. Pertwee's book although always concise and readable, and includes a large number of extremely valuable exercises. There is no danger of anybody studying this book and using the mechanics of speech unintelligently, as the whole theme of the book is the importance of understanding and appreciating words for their own sake, and there is no better safeguard against old "elocution voice" than a real appreciation of the sound and sense of words and their relation to one another.

Miss Emil-Behnke deals more with the psychology of speech and gesture than its mechanics. This is a book which I should recommend to everybody interested in the theatre, as it is not just a practical manual on the subject but a detailed and outspoken study of the psychology of acting and present day methods on the stage.

The next five books represent various attempts to deal with the problem of language in mysteries and moralities. The collection of Chester miracle plays are "done into modern English and arranged for acting." As Sir Barry Jackson points out in his introduction, one of the main difficulties in turning mediæval verse into present day English lies in the danger of changing the simplicity and charm of the old text into silliness and sentimentality, and although in this case the authors have on the whole succeeded so far as the actual diction is concerned, the result has been to make much of the verse seem the crudest doggerel now that it has been stripped of the air of remoteness and antiquity which the original language produced. The claim that they have been "arranged for acting," seems a little strange in view of the fact that in their original form all these plays were written for performance, but the present editions have introduced useful stage directions into the text and have added some admirable suggestions on production. "Old Plays for Modern Players" includes three mediæval Biblical plays which have been modernised into language which comes much more easily to the tongue than the dialogue in the preceding volume, but it is only fair to add that these three plays are more easy to modernise than the very stilted Chester Miracle Plays. This volume also includes plays by Heywood, Peele, Greene, and Ben Jonson.

Of the three Biblical plays by modern writers, the most successful is "At the Well of Bethlehem," a narrative drama consisting almost entirely of passages from the Authorised Version. This is a play which offers great opportunities for beautifully grouped production by a producer who has a sense of rhythm both in speech and movement. Much of the effectiveness of the play is due to its combination of simplicity and dignity. It is just this quality of dignity which is lacking in the two other plays. The authors of both these plays have striven for simplicity of speech but have usually merely achieved baldness. Neither seems to be sufficiently aware how easily simplicity lapses into banality. "The Cradle King" has one or two thoroughly effective passages, but in between the author is content to let his verse run on at a comfortable jog-trot. Both plays tell their story in a straight-forward and effective manner, and are well adapted to simple methods of production.

Lastly a couple of suggestions for Christmas presents. One is the luxurious edition of "The Duchess of Malfi" and the "White Devil," illustrated by Henry Keen. Personally I am not fond of the type of illustrations, which are mainly close-ups of the chief characters; I prefer the artist to leave these to my own imagination and devote himself to creating the general atmosphere of the main scenes. But that is merely a matter of personal prejudice, and even those who share this prejudice with me will admire the exquisite craftsmanship of these portraits and the way in which every drawing captures the sombre quality of the plays. The other suggestion for a Christmas present is Miss Iris Brooke's book of children's costumes since 1775. There is so much in the illustrations, the letterpress and the general appearance of this book that it will delight far more than just those who are technically interested in costume.

GORDON CRAIG'S "IRVING"

Reviewed by Ernest Milton

JUST as what you are is far more significant than what you do, so any work of art is bound to give us, whether he intended it or no, the spiritual measure of the man who produces it.

Thus, Mr. Gordon Craig's book, "Henry Irving," (J. M. Dent & Sons, 1935.) while completely realizing its subject, is, above everything, a vessel through which the author's own ideals and genius glow with as poignant and imperishable colour.

To many of the great actors who succeed him—I speak merely chronologically—the name of Henry Irving has been anathema. To the more ardent, who by temperament have been driven to the real theatre—fatal and shimmering allure!—Henry Irving has become an exasperation. He is the last actor within living memory upon whom the epithet "great" sits with any security. We know beforehand that if we essay any part of either great melodramatic or tragic intensity, Henry Irving will be there, a gloomy standard of perfection, and there will be some writer or some playgoer, who either in true sincerity or out of sheer servitude to custom will say—"Ah, but you should have seen Irving" or "How much better Irving did that!" or at best,—"This approximates to something of Irving's power," and while all this may be true it has made of Irving a damned nuisance. Kean does not affect us actors like that. He is too far away. His glamour is unimpaired because it is not thrust down our throats as a gag to similiar endeavour. If the public finds us electrifying or sensational, or if we treat a highly dramatic character as it should be treated, that is, theatrically—since we are in a theatre—we cannot be accused of thinking ourselves Keanlets, or substituting for original acting an imitation of what we have been told he did. But with Irving it is not so. He has been made the 'Bugaboo' of all enthusiastic players,—the sinister shade casting a damp of death on all subsequent theatrical art, the intangible and terrible arm that has seemed by some ironic freak to thrust itself into comradeship with all the little squawkers who don't want anything larger than the topical and the photographic—the minute and undisturbing reproduction of the life they live and know. These people have made alliance with the great dead artist, and have widened a grave

into which the dramatic youth of today may be flung with impunity. It is not so much that they think Irving incomparable, as that they wouldn't want that sort of thing at any price if they could get it, and ruthlessly use the corpse of the man to spread putrefaction and decay,—rather than his spirit as a fountain of life and inspiration.

Mr. Gordon Craig's book has let grass and flowers grow over the vexed bones, and with waft after waft of an enchanter's wand, has raised a creative soul from its fastness,—has given us a breathing human artist,—a Henry Irving, who with capacities that amply justified his ruthlessness and superb self-belief, yet takes his place in the history of the English Theatre as a man who loved the theatre, loved acting, and brought to both the magic of unique power and of a unique personality. A Henry Irving whom the playgoer and the actor who have not seen him can at last love and admire. We of the theatre, particularly, can now turn for comfort to an indomitable spirit, where formerly we could at best just not begrudge a little homage to the highly successful egoist.

The book does not trouble much about "Biographical details." It is not a realistic book. It reveals its central figure with heroic strokes. It is like the acting of the Irving that Gordon Craig presents to us.

But the major significance of this book is its acknowledgement of tradition. With the humility of greatness Gordon Craig stresses his own indebtedness as an artist to Henry Irving. He knows that the work takes its root in the Past, which is not to be confused with *imitation* of the Past. The torch has been given from hand to hand. It has been so with the Spring and the Harvest. Mithra has handed it on to Ra, Ra to Bacchus, and Bacchus to Christ. And in the theatre, Craig at the table of Irving received the cup from which Kean and Garrick and Betterton and Roscius had drunk, and found refreshment. It has been said of Bernhardt that she cried "A bas la tradition!" But she would not have dared to say it, had she not known what that tradition was. Tradition, in its true sense, has nothing to do with invention or personal idiosyncrasy. It does not prevent any artist from saying or making or doing

GORDON CRAIG'S "IRVING"

or discovering his own new thing, his contribution to, and extension of, the ever growing edifice. It has to do with the basic principles from which all of it must spring.

Here, then, is a call to arms, indeed. A momentous book that dares us to face beauty and excitement again. It is a promise to the public and a battle cry to the profession. It includes the whole range of the theatre because it has its roots in all time. It disdains to despise the sources of our great art.

It has, too, the renovating storm of anger.

The Shavian aspect of the book has already been widely discussed. The controversy is still raging, and we can only wait for further confirmation of Mr. Craig's position in the letters that passed between Mr. Shaw and Ellen Terry.

Yet even this phase of the book is—from the Theatre's point of view—constructive, and makes us impatient for the dramatic renaissance under Mr. Gordon Craig's direction which Mr. C. B. Cochran's enterprise is about to make possible.

EXETER CONFERENCE MINUTES

Minutes of the Annual Conference of the BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE held on Saturday, November 1st, 1930, at Exeter.

Present—Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth (in the Chair) and 124 Delegates.

1. The Minutes of the last Conference, which had been circulated in the December, 1929, number of DRAMA, were taken as read, and signed.

2. Resolution moved by the Village Drama Society: "That the British Drama League keep before Provincial Producers the value and beauty of Dialect as a method of expression."

Proposed by Miss Kelly seconded by Mr. Hannam Clark.

For a report of Miss Kelly's speech on this motion see page 38 of this number of DRAMA.

Miss Elsie Fogerty stated that she was an enthusiastic supporter of this resolution—she thought a cure would be to follow France, and make the children bilingual. She also recommended the restoration of vernacular folk-songs.

Mr. Lingard (Stockport Garrick Society) stated that as a North Countryman he would support this resolution—he thought it would be useful to prepare a complete synopsis of dialects in this country and trace their connection with each other. Captain Jenks (Bercinquin Players, Barking) spoke from the point of view of the scholastic profession—he said that there was a definite revival of interest in folk-lore and folk-songs.

Mr. Sutcliffe (Halifax Thespians) supported the resolution but asked what practical steps could be taken to carry it out?

Miss Kelly replied that the only way she could suggest was by educating public opinion.

Miss Domville (Symondsbury Village Players) suggested that plays for village people should be written in ordinary English, so that any district wishing to play them could translate them into its own dialect.

Mrs. Porter (Northfield Community Players) suggested that it was dangerous to write a play to be translated. The translation might confuse the author's ideas.

Miss Fogerty stated that suitable plays should be written in the form of scenarios which any district could then dialogue in its own speech. To preserve the correct dialect gramophone records should be obtained of the best dialects in each county.

Miss Fogerty proposed an amendment, which was accepted by Miss Kelly:—

"That the Council of the League be asked to stress by all possible means the value and beauty of dialect as a means of expression."

This amendment was seconded by Mr. Norris (Godalming), and carried unanimously.

Resolution moved by Miss Kelly, seconded by Miss Cecily Radford (Exeter Drama League):—

"That this conference recommends that a more careful use be made of the local Pageant as a definite form of Drama."

In speaking to this resolution Miss Kelly stated that Pageants were extremely popular in the country for various reasons—most Village Players were glad of the opportunity of getting away from their cramped village stages. Various facts should be remembered in order to produce a good pageant. Firstly the part of the chorus should be very carefully written to give the needed relief and not merely to serve to pass the time while the next scene was getting ready. Secondly, a careful study of history was vitally necessary—the social life of all classes of the period must be known—so as to understand their posture of mind. Further, a sense of humour need not be eliminated, and it was not necessary to rely on a jester to supply the humour. The crowd of course was the essential part of the pageant—the crowd must understand the scene and not be allowed just to come in and be "natural"—the contrast of the individual with the crowd was the keynote of the Pageant. Finally, Miss Kelly added that a wordless pageant was very much more difficult to render than a play with a dialogue, and she was much in favour of the spoken pageant as being easier for the player and also the audience.

Mrs. Rogers (Folk House, Bristol) stated that six historical episodes had lately been given in Bristol with very great success.

The resolution on being put to the vote was carried unanimously.

3. *Statement by Mr. Harley Granville-Barker on the present position in regard to the National Theatre.*

For a report of Mr. Granville-Barker's speech see page 34.

Mr. Hannam Clark enquired if the sum of one million pounds would be required every year. Mr. Granville-Barker replied that one single sum of a million pounds would be required for the cost of building and equipment of the Theatre.



THE MESSENGER. FROM "EVERYMAN,"
ILLUSTRATED BY THOMAS DERRICK.
PUBLISHED BY J. M. DENT & SONS, LTD.





SCENE FROM "GRINGOIRE," AS PRODUCED DURING THE RECENT LONDON AND DISTRICT TOUR OF "LE THEATRE CLASSIQUE UNIVERSITAIRE." (SEE PAGE 46).

EXETER CONFERENCE MINUTES

Referring to the suggestion that the B.B.C. surplus shall be utilised for the establishment of a National Theatre, Mr. Sharman congratulated Mr. Granville-Barker on the ease and facility with which he was ready to appropriate other people's money, and he enquired why the members of Parliament in the North of England should be badgered for a building in London?

Mr. Granville-Barker asked where Mr. Sharman would like the National Theatre? By a process of elimination London would be found to be the only place but he hoped that when the National Theatre had been established, Municipal Theatres would be founded in other centres.

Mr. Rea protested against the use of B.B.C. money for the National Theatre which would benefit only a small public, and he denied that there was any analogy with the appropriation of the Road Fund.

The Hon. Mary Parkington pointed out that the theatre would not be only for the benefit of a few but would benefit the cultural life of the whole country.

Mr. S. M. Fox suggested that there seemed need for extensive propaganda and he proposed that a fund should be inaugurated. Mr. Granville-Barker welcomed Mr. Fox's suggestion.

Mr. Sharman moved, Mr. Sheppard seconded, and it was

RESOLVED:—"*That the League's Council should consider the ways and means for inaugurating a Propaganda Fund on behalf of the National Theatre.*"

After adjournment for lunch,

4. Resolution moved by Mr. Robert Newton:—

"*That the British Drama League should encourage a better understanding between the Professional and Amateur Theatre.*"

Mr. Newton said that there was a certain element of jealousy between the professionals and amateurs. The professional was apt to be intolerant, and the amateur to be arrogant. It was essential to establish their united faith in the Drama in the face of so much outside competition such as the talkies and the general antipathy to intelligent entertainment. He was looking forward to having not only representatives but offices of the League in all the big cities of England and so bring the League more closely in touch with its members, both amateur and professional.

Mr. Boughton Chatwin, who seconded the resolution, deprecated any hard and fast distinction between professionals and amateurs. He likened the amateurs to the Territorial soldier who, while not trained as a professional, did good work. In like ways he believed the amateur could be equally useful to the professional.

The Chairman stated that co-operation between the professional and the amateur was of course essential for the League's existence.

Mr. William Armstrong (Liverpool Repertory Theatre) stated that amateurs do sometimes queer the pitch for professionals. He instanced an occasion at Liverpool where a certain play was announced to be produced during the season at the Repertory Theatre. A local amateur dramatic society had deliberately produced this play before the date of its performance at the Repertory Theatre, which had obliged him to withdraw it. Mr. Armstrong concluded by stating that no one could be keener on the amateur movement than himself, and he would much welcome a better rapprochement between the professional and amateur theatre.

This resolution on being put to the vote was carried unanimously.

5. Resolution moved by Mr. Ernest Pitts:—

"*That the British Drama League should urge the encouragement of the amateur producer, designer of costume and decor, and author.*"

Mr. Pitts stated that the Drama League had associated itself definitely with the idea of a new theatre because the traditional theatre had not fulfilled what was expected of it. As an amateur actor and producer he considered the "talkies" were going to kill the traditional theatre, but the symbolic and poetic drama would not be affected by them. The Drama League had failed to promote the new movement in the theatre on its amateur side and he urged that steps should be taken to remedy this failure.

Mr. Twilley (Leicester Drama Society) who seconded the resolution said he would like to include the amateur dramatic critic as also needing encouragement.

Mr. Sharman stated that he did not think the "talkies" would kill the theatre—"tinned salmon had not killed the demand for fresh salmon."

Mr. Russ (Oxsted and Lingsfield Players) said that many people would go mad were it not for the opportunity of self-expression through Drama and affirmed that the only producer who was any good was one who helped the actor to express himself.

Miss Macaulay (Exeter W.E.A.) favoured amateur producers on the ground that they had more time and took more trouble to understand and interpret the inner meaning of the play.

Miss Edith Craig pointed out that, on the contrary the professional who had not to worry about the fundamentals of technique had all the more time to devote to the play's inner meaning. If the amateur producer was as good in every way as the professional and understood the medium as well, he should be encouraged. But this was rare. Amateur producers still needed a great deal of training, and in this way the Drama League Schools were doing a great deal of excellent work.

Mr. Benson (Medway Theatre Club) opposed the motion.

The resolution on being put to the vote was lost.

So as to prevent a misunderstanding of the League's attitude, Mrs. Salaman moved the following resolution which was seconded by Mr. Bourne and carried unanimously:—

"*That the aims of the League—to promote the art of the Theatre both in amateur and professional—should be re-affirmed.*"

6 ELECTION OF THE NEW NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE FESTIVAL.

Mr. Twilley (Leicester) moved, Miss Constance Radford (Sheffield Playgoers) seconded, and it was resolved:—

"*That Mr. Purdom, Mr. Sharman, and Mr. Doran should be re-elected for the coming year.*"

7 PLACE OF NEXT CONFERENCE.

The Chairman reported that the Hull Repertory Theatre and Playgoers Society had kindly renewed their invitation to hold the Conference in Hull—in-itations had also been received from the Halifax Thespians and the Leicester Drama Society.

Mr. Purdom proposed, and Mr. Adams seconded:—

"*That the invitation from Hull be accepted.*"

In view of the fact that this is the fourth time that Hull had forwarded its invitation—Mr. Sutcliffe (Halifax) withdrew his proposal but expressed the hope that it might be accepted next year.

EXETER CONFERENCE MINUTES

Mr. Twilley (Leicester) proposed an amendment that the conference should visit Leicester.

This amendment was lost and the substantive resolution was carried.

Mr. Stone (Bournemouth Orchestral and Dramatic Club) stated that he had wished to extend an informal invitation to the Conference to visit Bournemouth but he hoped that this might take place on another occasion.

APPEAL FOR MEMBERS.

Mr. Rea stated that as Hon. Treasurer he would like to appeal for a larger membership. It was essential that the League should be self-supporting and to this end a larger membership was essential. He appealed to all societies who were able to become Patron Members at the subscription of five guineas.

Mr. Whitworth was asked to circulate among societies an appeal for an increased subscription from those able to afford it.

INSTITUTE OF ARTS IN THE LONDON UNIVERSITY.

Miss Fogerty referred to the new Institute of Arts in the London University, and she urged that representation

should be made so that the art of the Theatre might be officially represented in that Institute. This was agreed.

INTERNATIONAL PLAYS.

Mr. R. K. Yajuk (Professor of English in Bhamgar, India) moved the following resolution:—

"That the British Drama League should urge the encouragement of performances of standard foreign plays adapted to the English Stage with a view to accepting as national whatever is best in international art."

This resolution was seconded by Mr. Sheppard and carried unanimously. Mr. Benson suggested that the resolution should be brought before the National Festival Committee.

Mr. Bourne stated that he would like to thank Mr. Yajuk for his suggestion.

The Conference closed with a vote of thanks to Miss Radford, the Exeter Drama League, and the hosts and hostesses of the delegates—proposed by Mr. Stone (Bournemouth), seconded by Capt. Jenks (Barking), and carried with acclamation.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

SECOND VISIT OF THE THEATRE CLASSIQUE UNIVERSITAIRE.

On October 13th Professor Toudouze (Professor of Literature, History and Dramatic Archology) commenced a fortnight's tour in London and elsewhere with his troupe of players selected from various Parisian Theatres: The Plays, produced by Mr. Rigault of the Comédie Française were:—"Le Médecin Malgré Lui," "Gringoire," by De Banville, "La Grammaire," by Labiche, "Les Précieuses Ridicules," and "Le Barbier de Séville."

In a week twelve performances were given in London Schools, on the Sunday an evening performance was given at the Institut Français, South Kensington, and two performances daily were given at Southampton, Bedford, Croydon, Northampton, and Maidstone. Altogether about 10,000 pupils at Sunday Schools with a sprinkling of outsiders, saw a French Play adequately presented—most of them for the first time. In March the French Players had paid their first visit to England, spending a week in Folkestone, Castleford, Hull, Bedford, Bamsley and London. THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE and the modern Language Association held a meeting in January last when, with Mr. Henry Ainley in the chair, the subject of the Drama and the teaching of modern languages was discussed. These French visits are at any rate partly due to the information gained at the meeting. A third visit being arranged by Mr. T. R. Dawes and the following dates are already fixed:—March 7th, Birmingham; 8th Stratford (uncertain); 9th Oundle; 10th, Harrow; 11th and 12th, Hull; 13th, Sheffield; 14th and 15th, Leeds; 16th, Nottingham. These visits have certainly enlivened the study of French in some schools. The opinion of our visitors may be judged from this extract of a letter from Professor Toudouze:—"The official nature of our organisation places it in such a position in France that the advent of our tour in England has been greeted with delight by the heads of the French Government to whom we have communi-

cated all the details. They have been deeply touched by the expressions of sympathy lavished on our collaborators and on our organisation by the Lord Mayor of London, the Chairman of the L.C.C., the Mayors of Northampton, Bedford, and Southampton and representatives of the authorities."

The organisation of the London visits is in the hands of a special committee drawn from the schools intended.

Is it too much to hope that as French actors have brought Molière to English Schools, English actors may by and by take Shakespeare to French schools?

THE GARRET PLAYERS. (Glasgow.)

This enthusiastic band of very young players who have constructed their own tiny theatre in the garret of a private house in Glasgow, presented for six nights commencing October 20th, J. L. Balderston's romantic play "Berkeley Square." Their achievement is remarkable in that they succeeded in preserving the graceful manners and deportment required in the four eighteenth century "nobility" scenes, on a stage about 17 feet by 9 feet, and that costumes, wigs, make-up, lighting and specially constructed scenery all stood the test of scrutiny from an audience extending to four feet from the footlights.

Douglas Moodie, in addition to producing, played Peter Standish. He was at home in both modern and period scenes and his emotional acting towards the end was particularly fine. Victoria Moir gave a sympathetic rendering of Helen Pettigrew and showed herself to be a clever actress with instructive knowledge of gesture and expression. The part of Tom Pettigrew though well and consistently drawn by Harry Allen, was, I think, wrongly characterized. The play needs light relief and Tom Pettigrew should provide it.

For the rest, the women were good, but some of the men were not very comfortable in the period scenes. The Garret Players are now hard at work on their entry for the Drama Festival. A.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

THE NORTHAMPTON REPERTORY THEATRE

The Northampton Repertory Theatre has now been in existence since 1837, the aim of its founders was to provide for the people of Northampton a theatre at which plays of a high standard could be produced throughout the year and at popular prices.

This has been achieved, and it now ranks as one of the finest in the country. People go to it from all parts, from Oundle, Kettering, Wellingborough, Bedford, and even Leicester.

Among the successes of the season are—"And so to Bed," "The Witch," "Dear Brutus," "Misalliance," "Fanny's First Play," "Mary Rose." All Lonsdale plays, including "Canaries Sometimes Sing." the new ending was embodied in this production for the first time on any stage.

Noel Coward has also been a great favourite, and when they have played "The Young Idea," as they are shortly to do, all the plays of that young playwright will have been seen at this theatre. The forthcoming attractions are:—"March Hares" (H. M. Gribble), "The Letter" and "Our Betters" (Somerset Maugham), "Murder on the Second Floor" (F. Vosper), the last-mentioned being a Repertory pre-release "Good Morning, Bill" (Wodehouse), and, for the festive season, a revival of that evergreen classic, "The School for Scandal."

The very capable producer is Mr. Herbert M. Prentice, a man who is well known in the four corners of the world of repertory.

THE SAXON PLAYERS.

In selecting "Ambrose Applejohn's Adventure" by Walter Hackett for their third production, the above players certainly showed courage and determination, and made good progress on the two previous efforts.

"Ambrose Applejohn" is a difficult play at best, but with a limited amount of stage room, the players were put to a severe test, from which they emerged commendably and are to be congratulated on a very creditable performance.

The play centres largely in the name part, which Mr. John Jones filled meritoriously, although he could have set a brisker pace in first the and last acts.

In this act, there is no doubt, Mr. Jones received a great deal of support from the uniform acting of the mutinous crew, clamouring for a new leader. As a "crowd" they did splendidly and formed a fine back-ground.

The scenery and dressing were well executed, but the shifting of the former might have been carried out quicker and quieter.

The rest of the cast filled their parts efficiently and the whole venture owed much of its success to the untiring energy of the producer, Mr. Douglas K. Christie who had undoubtedly given much time and thought to the interpretation of the play both before and behind the scenes. S. F. TANDY.

ACTON REPERTORY COMPANY

The Company opens a new season on Wednesday, December 10th, at St. Dunstan's Parish Hall, East Acton Lane, W.3, with a Combined Sale of Work and Social. The Social programme has been designed on a broad plan, and in addition to the concert items and

dancing, will include a selection of dramatic work from the following repertoire:—

"BEFORE BREAKFAST"	-	by Eugene O'Neill.
"GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN"	(first performance in this country)	- M. Archer.
"A POT O' BROTH"	-	An Irish Comedy by W. B. Yeats.
"KING LEAR'S WIFE"	-	by Gordon Bottomley

Admission is by ticket only, 1/- (exclusive of tea and refreshment), to be obtained from the General Manager, Mr. G. E. Clayton, 56 Lindfield Road, Ealing, W.5.

W. H. SMITH & SON DRAMATIC SOCIETY

At the Cripplegate Institute, on October 17th and 18th, the W. H. Smith & Son Dramatic Society gave an interesting performance of "The Bill of Divorcement." The casting was excellent, and the production, by Mr. Middleditch, shewed unusual sensitiveness to the finer shades of the author's intention, combined with sound judgment in keeping his company within the limits of their capacity. Miss Margot Brett had studied the part of Sydney Fairfield with real insight and thoughtful care. With one exception, all the parts were successfully individualised and well in the picture. The exception was the Miss Fairfield of Miss Ada Loc, which was reminiscent of many other sour old maids in other plays. It is much to be hoped that this very able company will soon muster the courage for adventuring in a new play. They are strong enough for adventure. M.M.

NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF COMMUNITY DRAMA, NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The following Summary of Receipts and Payments for the Year ending 31st May, 1930, is issued for the information of Members.

RECEIPTS

Dr.	£	s.	d.
To sale of Theatre Seats and Programmes—223	5	9	
To Balance, Cash at Banker's 31st May, 1929—	21	2	3
	£244	8	0

PAYMENTS

Cr.			
By Expenses at Theatre	-	-	66 9 7
By Stage Director's Fee	-	-	10 10 0
By Fares of Teams to London	-	-	88 13 0
By Expenses of Committee Members	-	-	21 7 11
By Printing	-	-	25 18 0
By Postage and Incidental Expenses	-	-	13 7 8
			£226 6 2
By Balance, Cash at Banker's, 31st May, 1930—			18 1 1
			£244 8 0

Examined with the books, accounts and vouchers, and found correct.

SEARLE, HONEYBOURNE & CO.

Chartered Accountants.

LONDON, 20th OCTOBER, 1930.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MR. TERENCE GRAY
AND THE DRAMA LEAGUE

Sir,

Without knowing any of the tacit implications upon which Mr. Terence Gray bases his criticism of the League's work, I must confess to be in hearty sympathy with his attitude.

No man of the theatre would dream of finding vitally interesting articles in the monthly "DRAMA" (there has yet to be issued a worth-while journal of the theatre) and the news would shame any local weekly newspaper.

The Library—emulating French's—can readily supply the latest West-end hits, but as an aid to the group that wants to produce something new and original, it is barren. Up and down the country, the bigger societies have to run competitions to get new plays, while the smaller groups are left lamenting, being unable themselves to afford such means of unearthing new material. The Library has practically no plays in MSS. at all. Does the League promote co-operation between groups of similar standing? When an original artistic production is staged at Bristol, why is not Bath, Gloucester, Stroud and Cheltenham permitted to see the spectacle. Drama groups who value their art should be only too willing to arrange a performance for a guest company, provided the standard of production was high. I endeavour to appreciate the work that the League is doing but I must confess its facilities seem to assist the conservation of all that which is happily enshrined in the public taste. If, as I imagine, Mr. Terence Gray is interested in theatrical experiment, where can he find it being fostered in the League? Can one expect him to support a body which, while reverencing the "Clouds," pins its faith to "Tilly of Bloomsbury" in the present?

Fragmatically yours,
E. MICHAEL REILLY.

40 Messaline Avenue,
Acton, W.3.
Nov. 8th, 1930.

Sir,

In your Editorial comment on Mr. Terence Gray's letter in the October number of DRAMA, you ask him to enlighten you as to what he means by "progressive."

As I understand Mr. Gray, in his view, a "progressive" theatre is simply one without a proscenium. An "artistic and progressive" production is one upon some sort of platform stage embellished with steps and pillars. An "old-fashioned and retrogressive" production is one behind a picture frame proscenium with a stage representing a modern room.

I think that this peculiar attitude on the part of Mr. Gray and others of his school, arises from their confusion of the use of a proscenium with the convention of a fourth wall and photographic realism. All efforts to move away from our present out-worn naturalistic convention are, I think, an excellent thing. But why should these efforts towards a more interpretative theatrical form lead us to abandon the proscenium opening, which after all is simply a useful device for

limiting the acting area to a space in which it is possible for actors and scenic designers to create the emotion and atmosphere which is the life of the theatre? And why should not it be possible to find our new interpretative form through the medium of a heightened representation of life, instead of flying to the extreme cold and detached symbolism or, alternatively, to an art which has more connection with the circus than the theatre?

If I have misunderstood Mr. Gray, I offer him my apologies. It is impossible not to admire the enthusiasm and energy he brings to the cause of a new theatre, but there are many people who feel that this cause is better served by attempting to evolve new forms out of our present material, than by rushing towards extreme experiments which alienate the ordinary man from the theatre and leave us open to attacks from the old school.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL MACOWEN.

Gate Theatre Studio,
16a Villiers Street,
Strand, W.C.

This Correspondence is now closed, except for a letter from Mr. Terence Gray which will appear in the January number of DRAMA, together with Editorial Comment.

Editor, DRAMA

PLAYS IN CHURCH

Dear Sir,

Mr. Seaward Beddow in the June "Drama" wrote of the advantageous setting of a church for religious drama. That is only provided the audience can see.

The seats of a church being on a level, it really means that only the first few rows can see or hear.

Mr. Masfield's Easter play two years ago in Canterbury Cathedral suffered from this defect. People came from a distance by train and stood waiting at one door in queues. But I and those around me saw nothing, literally nothing, at the end of the very long nave. We sat packed close together and the women were not allowed to remove their hats, but all the same a collection was taken up from the audience. The beauty of the nave as a setting was thrown away, as no actors were visible or audible. Whereas, at Oberammergau the performance is deeply impressive, just because the audience can see and hear in comfort, the station-like roof of the auditorium and the bare walls and tip-up seats do not detract an iota from the impressiveness.

If the clergy wish to use their empty churches for religious drama, then they must grasp the first element of dramatic success, i.e., the audience must have an unimpeded view of the action. Otherwise, they would do better as a certain church does, whose name escapes me; but this parish produces every year a superb Christmas mystery and takes the Chelsea Palace Theatre, and so allows the audience to see and hear in comfort.

Yours sincerely,
JOSEPHINE KNOWLES.

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MEMBERSHIP of the League is open to all persons who are concerned with the practice or enjoyment of the Art of the Theatre, and may be acquired by the payment of an annual subscription of £1 1s.

Any organised society or group of not less than ten persons may become affiliated to the Drama League, and as an affiliated body shall acquire and exercise all the privileges afforded by the League, including free receipt of "Drama" monthly and the use of the League's Library. The minimum affiliation fee is £1 1s.

Further particulars from the Hon. Secretary,
8 ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON, W.C.2

Telephone: Temple Bar 8507-8

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